593 home, in turn, while the others go off on commercial journeys. This idea of one brother staying in the house and looking after the common wife is what many anthropologists believe to be the explanation as to why these people practice polyandry; that is, so that they can be sure the children issuing from the marriage will be at least from the same family, even if they are not those of one particular man. Thus, during the war, I saw a Sikh officer (an Englishman) who received a request from one of his soldiers to go home because, he said, his wife had had a child. The officer said, "But you have been away for two years, so how can your wife have had a child? Is that any reason to go back?" And the Sikh answered, "Yes, but my brother was at home," and then retracted his words, because the Sikhs, at least, do not like admitting they are polyandrous, though it certainly exists in the northern part of the Punjab, among them as well as among the Hindu *jats*.

In Leh, I was struck by the fact that, in most families, there seems to be no organization at all. Complete promiscuity apparently exists between the brothers and the common wife, especially during the winter months when the place is very often snowed in completely and the whole family lives in one room because they have not enough fuel to heat the whole house. This I found out both from questioning the people and from hearing details from Europeans who have gone into the question before.

593 114 121 • 201 152 Oddly enough, however, in all anthropological books about polyandry, one hears that the brothers, in turn, go in to the wife and signal their presence in the nuptial room to the other brothers by leaving some mark at the door. They either put their sword against the door or their stick, or leave their shoes or hat outside, or hang their beads on a hook at the door as a signal that they are in with the common wife and the other brothers may have no access to the room. When I examined this first-hand, however, and also in the

2156

593 case of other polyandrous peoples like the
114 Todas and Tiyas, I found that they say
121 this is not practised any longer, but it
used to be a custom two or three gener-
201 ations back. I have never found a case of
152 its actually being practised today and, for
this reason, I have strong psychoanalytical
suspicions that it has never been practised,
but that this story has been put out by
polyandrous people as an indication of,
what I should call popularly, "wishful
thinking." Each of the brothers would
like, in some way, to have the common
wife all to himself and would like to mani-
fest this virility on his part by hanging up
some emblem at the door. The sword, the
stick, the shoes, the hat, and even the
beads are all, psychoanalytically, symbols
of virility, and it seems as if the men would
like to have this custom which, possibly,
has never existed, and each of them gains
a certain satisfaction in thus imagining a
virility which he feels he does not have.

181 The morality of the polyandrous people
595 is very high. I mean by this that, as poly-
178 andry is an institutionalized social system,
they stick to it very strictly. If you ask
missionaries who have been among poly-
androus people, they will, of course, tell
you that polyandry is a very immoral prac-
tice. But if you speak to the people them-
selves, they, on the contrary, consider it
highly immoral not to be polyandrous. If
we take as the definition of morality, con-
formity to the social standards of the set-
ting in which one lives, then one can say
that polyandrous people, at least in this
area which I studied, are very moral. The
old people complain that today the young
ones are getting highly immoral and lax
in not carrying out the tradition of poly-
andry. Certainly, on the borders of India,
where the people come in contact with the
monogamous families of India, or with
Europeans, polyandry is dying out to some
extent.

595 I remember speaking to an old Tibetan
178 called Tocktock in Leh, who told me that,
in town, Indian and Turki traders (the
428 latter from Chinese Turkestan), and Euro-